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Report to the Honorable Pete Wilson, U.S. Senate

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AMMUNITION AND EXPLOSIVES

Improved Controls Are Needed to Reduce Thefts at Fort Bragg and Camp Pendleton

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of the United States

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The Honorable Pete Wilson
United States Senate

Dear Senator Wilson:

As requested in your letter of April 14, 1987, we have evaluated Camp Pendleton's controls over ammunition and explosives and compared its controls to those at Fort Bragg, North Carolina. We also evaluated Camp Pendleton's controls over combat gear because of your concerns about large scale theft of those items.

As arranged with your Office, unless you publicly announce its contents earlier, we plan no further distribution of this report until 30 days from its issue date. At that time, we will send copies to interested committees and other Members of Congress; the Secretary of Defense; the Secretaries of the Army and Navy; and the Director, Office of Management and Budget. We will also make copies available to other parties upon request.

This report was prepared under the direction of Martin M Ferber, Associate Director. Other major contributors are listed in appendix III.

Sincerely yours,

Frank C. Conahan
Assistant Comptroller General

Executive Summary

Purpose

In 1987, two San Francisco police officers and a Marine corporal pleaded guilty to various charges involving dangerous munitions stolen from the Marine Corps base, Camp Pendleton, California. Senator Pete Wilson asked GAO to review Camp Pendleton's controls over munitions and compare them to the improvements GAO reported in munitions control at Fort Bragg Army Base, North Carolina. He also asked GAO to review the measures for safeguarding Camp Pendleton's combat gear.

Background

Military munitions include dangerous items that can cause serious injury or death. If not properly protected, these items are subject to pilferage due to their size and availability and the market for them. Therefore, these items need to be safeguarded from theft or misuse. Combat gear, such as helmets, gas masks, and flak jackets, has also been stolen from military supplies.

Major thefts of ammunition and explosives (A&E) and combat gear prompted Camp Pendleton officials to implement tighter controls over these items. Similarly, Fort Bragg, after experiencing several thefts of A&E, has also improved controls over these items. At both bases controls include procedures for storing and handling A&E and monitoring compliance with policies and procedures, as well as physical security measures.

Results in Brief

GAO's review showed that, generally, the appropriate A&E procedures are followed and provide a substantial measure of control at Camp Pendleton. The base had recently made certain improvements to its A&E controls, and it quickly made other changes based on concerns GAO raised regarding the base's policies and procedures. However, some A&E are still being stolen and further improvements in controls are necessary. Some units have not complied with the base's controls for A&E management and accountability. Also, Camp Pendleton commands have not used the results of their compliance inspections, and inspections of training ranges were not thorough. Marines are not always searched for A&E when leaving the training ranges because searches, while allowed at the discretion of commanding officers, are not required.

Although Fort Bragg has improved its A&E controls, opportunities still exist for improvement. Fort Bragg's policies and practices discourage soldiers from promptly returning A&E to its ammunition supply point after training, thereby increasing the opportunity for theft. Officials often did not correct deficiencies noted during compliance inspections.

The Marine Corps has substantially improved its control of combat gear at Camp Pendleton, though some minor weaknesses remain.

GAO's Analysis

Camp Pendleton

Ordnance Office Not Maintaining Accurate A&E Records

The Marine Corps Base Command's ordnance office did not maintain accurate A&E accounting records for its Infantry School of Training, nor did it reduce authorized A&E account balances when it approved requisitions. As a result, units requisitioned and received more A&E for training than authorized.

Inspection Results Not Used to Enforce Compliance

The base's commands were not using the results of various inspections to enforce compliance with A&E policies and procedures.

Inspection of Ranges Inadequate and Searches Not Required

The base's inspections of ranges at the end of training events were not thorough, and the base did not require or routinely perform physical searches of Marines at ranges. As a result, A&E were stolen from the ranges or hidden for later removal. Quantities of such items have been recovered in and about the base. In contrast, Fort Bragg performs more thorough range inspections and requires its soldiers to be searched before they leave the ranges.

Fort Bragg

Fort Bragg Practices Discourage the Return of A&E

Fort Bragg's ammunition reconciliation process, which includes the reconciliation of small-arms ammunition residue, is easily circumvented, time-consuming, and administered for too short a daily period for return of unused A&E, thereby discouraging soldiers from returning A&E to the ammunition supply point after training. Moreover, the supply point operates a holding area where A&E under unit control are temporarily stored. This practice prolongs unit possession, increases the opportunity for theft, and deemphasizes the importance of returning A&E immediately to the security of the supply point. In contrast, Camp Pendleton

operates no holding area and has a streamlined return process. Its ammunition supply point accepts returns 24 hours a day.

Storage of A&E on Unit Premises Impairs Control

Fort Bragg units store A&E in their weapon rooms on their premises, which prolongs the time they control A&E. Camp Pendleton, in contrast, does not allow units to store A&E in their weapon rooms or on unit premises.

Amnesty Program

Fort Bragg has an amnesty program that allows soldiers to turn in A&E in their possession without question or punishment. By offering amnesty, Fort Bragg is recovering some A&E acquired by unauthorized means. Camp Pendleton has no amnesty program.

Noncompliance With A&E Accountability Procedures Continues

In 1986, GAO reported that 40 percent of compliance inspections during an 8-month period showed deviations from procedures for A&E use and accountability. Although Fort Bragg has since increased the number of these inspections as GAO recommended, the rate of noncompliance has remained constant.

Inspection Results Not Used to Enforce Compliance

Fort Bragg's commands were not using the results of its Quality Assurance Specialists and Ammunition Surveillance inspection reports to enforce compliance with A&E policies and procedures.

Recommendations

To Camp Pendleton

GAO recommends that the Commanding General, Camp Pendleton,

- ensure that range inspections are more thorough and that Marines are searched for A&E before they leave the ranges after training exercises, and
- ensure that the base's procedures for controlling A&E are complied with.

Other specific recommendations are detailed in chapter 2 of GAO's report.

To the Army and Fort Bragg

GAO recommends that the Secretary of the Army eliminate the reconciliation of small-arms ammunition residue.

GAO further recommends that the Commanding General, Fort Bragg,

- expand the ammunition supply point's hours of operation to enable immediate return of unused A&E to its control,
- authorize the use of holding areas for A&E under unit control only when operationally necessary and require proper safeguards be applied to A&E when under such unit control, and
- monitor the results of inspections and enforce compliance among those units and commands found to deviate from A&E regulations and procedures.

Agency Comments

The Department of Defense generally agreed with most of GAO's findings and recommendations and noted planned or ongoing corrective actions to improve its management of ammunition and explosives (see app. II).

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Abbreviations

A&E	Ammunition and Explosives
ASP	Ammunition Supply Point
DOD	Department of Defense
GAO	General Accounting Office

Chapter 1

Introduction

Munitions and combat gear are necessary for training our military forces, keeping them ready to fight, and sustaining them should warfare occur. Military munitions include some very destructive devices, such as C-4 plastic explosive, anti-personnel mines, and fragmentation grenades. Combat gear includes helmets, bayonets, and gas masks. If not properly protected, these items are subject to pilferage due to their size and availability and the market for them. Therefore, these items need to be safeguarded from loss, theft, or misuse. To accomplish this the military services must have and follow sound procedures to adequately account for and control such items in their possession.

Following thefts of ammunition and explosives (A&E) at Marine Corps base, Camp Pendleton, California, Senator Pete Wilson asked us to evaluate the base's control of these items and compare its controls to improvements we reported in A&E controls at the Army's base at Fort Bragg, North Carolina.[1] Additionally, because of previous large-scale thefts of combat gear at Camp Pendleton, the Senator asked us to evaluate improvements in the base's accountability over those items.

Thefts of Camp Pendleton A&E and Combat Gear

The investigation of A&E thefts at Camp Pendleton was prompted by the arrest of two San Francisco police officers for unauthorized possession of military munitions. Among other items, authorities seized 46 pounds of C-4 plastic explosive, 46 blasting caps, 20 fragmentation grenades, 50 feet of detonation cord (a high velocity explosive in cord form), and about 7,000 rounds of various small-arms ammunition.

According to investigators, the alleged source of the stolen A&E was a Marine corporal ammunition technician stationed at the 1st Marine Division, Camp Pendleton. As an ammunition technician, the Corporal was responsible for picking up A&E at the base's ammunition supply point (ASP), delivering it to training ranges, and returning any unused items to the ASP when the training was over. He was also responsible for the accountability of munitions allocated to his battalion.

When arrested, the Corporal allegedly had been stealing A&E from Camp Pendleton for about 6 months. In one instance, on September 23, 1986, he allegedly received 20 fragmentation grenades from the ASP for a training event that was later cancelled, but the supply point had no record of the grenades being returned. On another occasion, on December 3,

[1] Ammunition and Explosives: Improved Controls and Accountability at Fort Bragg (GAO/NSIAD-87-44BR, Nov. 13, 1986)

1986, the Corporal allegedly obtained 20 pounds of C-4 plastic explosive from the ASP by forging documents for training events that never occurred. Chapter 2 discusses the base's response to these thefts.

Other earlier thefts involved combat gear worth several million dollars and led to RIPSTOP, a successful undercover sting operation conducted from 1981-84 by the Naval Investigative Service and the Federal Bureau of Investigation, in cooperation with the Marine Corps. Chapter 4 discusses Operation RIPSTOP and the Marine Corps' efforts to preclude any further theft of combat gear.

Camp Pendleton and Fort Bragg: Similar Installations

Camp Pendleton and Fort Bragg share several common characteristics. They are of a similar size, have important training missions, and manage roughly equal quantities of A&E.

Camp Pendleton covers 125,000 acres and accommodates over 45,000 people—about 33,000 Marines and civilian employees and 12,000 dependents. Crisscrossed by 500 miles of roads and covering two mountain ranges and 17 miles of coastline, it controls access via seven gates guarded by military police; six of the gates are manned 24 hours a day.

Like Camp Pendleton, Fort Bragg is a large complex. It covers 131,000 acres and accommodates more than 40,000 soldiers, their families, and civilian employees. Unlike Camp Pendleton, Fort Bragg is an open base, and has many avenues of unchallenged public access, several of which are well-travelled public roads.

Camp Pendleton is home to two major Marine Corps commands—the Marine Corps Base Command, Camp Pendleton, and the 1st Marine Expeditionary Force Command, its major tenant command. The Marine Corps Base Command conducts specialized schools and functions as landlord by providing housing, training facilities, and logistics support for the Marine Expeditionary Force Command and other tenant organizations. Fort Bragg is home to the Headquarters, XVIII Airborne Corps, its various subordinate commands, and the Headquarters, 1st Special Operations Command.

Both bases have extensive facilities for A&E training: Camp Pendleton has 74 firing ranges, Fort Bragg has 60. The ranges are also used by visiting units, including those from the National Guard and Reserves.

In support of training missions, the bases' ASPs receive, store, and issue large amounts of A&E. During the 18 months ending March 31, 1987 (the latest data available at the time of our visit), Camp Pendleton used a monthly average of 2.7 million rounds of small-arms ammunition, 16,147 demolition items, and 2,564 grenades. Fort Bragg, during fiscal years 1986 and 1987, used a monthly average of 1.4 million rounds of small-arms ammunition, 14,210 demolition items, and 423 grenades.

Camp Pendleton and Fort Bragg use standards that estimate the amount of A&E needed for training to determine their annual training requirements. Both bases manage A&E according to five basic steps: (1) command headquarters approves specified amounts of A&E for training, (2) A&E is allocated to units, (3) ASP issues A&E to units as they request it, (4) units control A&E issued to them, and (5) units are required to return unused A&E to the ASP after training exercises.

Objectives, Scope, and Methodology

Concerned about thefts of A&E and combat gear at Camp Pendleton, Senator Pete Wilson asked us to evaluate its controls over these items, and compare its procedures for controlling A&E to the improvements made at Fort Bragg as described in our 1986 report. Our review specifically focused on three major questions:

- How effective are Camp Pendleton's controls over A&E in detecting and deterring thefts?
- What are the major strengths and weaknesses in Fort Bragg and Camp Pendleton controls over A&E?[1]
- What improvements have been made to Camp Pendleton's controls over combat gear, and how effective are those improvements at detecting and deterring thefts?

We performed the majority of our work at Camp Pendleton; we also did a follow-up to our 1986 review at Fort Bragg.

At Camp Pendleton we evaluated the policies, procedures, and practices concerning A&E and combat gear followed within the Marine Corps Base Command, the 1st Marine Division, and the 1st Force Service Support

[1]We originally intended to compare Camp Pendleton's A&E controls to the improvements implemented at Fort Bragg. However, when we found that one of our previously recommended improvements had not been made at Fort Bragg and certain other improvements were not relevant because of organizational differences between the two bases, we changed our objective to identifying the strengths and weaknesses in the bases' controls over A&E.

Group, 1st Marine Expeditionary Force Command. We interviewed officials responsible for receiving, storing, issuing, and controlling these items and for investigating and enforcing procedural compliance. We also observed and tested physical security and control practices; obtained, reviewed, and analyzed various records, ASP operations, inventory listings and reports; and compared pertinent Camp Pendleton operations to improvements implemented at Fort Bragg.

At Fort Bragg we updated our information regarding its A&E controls and accountability since our 1986 review. Specifically, we interviewed officials and analyzed data regarding (1) the 1st Special Operations Command's control procedures over A&E, (2) ASP operations, (3) inspections of unit compliance with A&E controls and accountability requirements, and (4) recoveries of A&E from unauthorized locations on and off post during fiscal years 1986 and 1987.

Because we concentrated our review efforts at Camp Pendleton and Fort Bragg, the results of our analysis cannot be projected to other Marine Corps or Army bases. We discussed our results with officials from all those commands and offices at Camp Pendleton and Fort Bragg where we had done work and with officials at Marine Corps and Army headquarters, Washington, D.C.

We conducted our review from May 1987 through May 1988 in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards.

Control of Ammunition and Explosives at Camp Pendleton Have Been Strengthened, but Further Improvements Are Needed to Reduce Thefts

The Marine Corps has established comprehensive procedures for controlling A&E at Camp Pendleton that include (1) a system for determining A&E training requirements, allocating A&E to units, and approving A&E requisitions by units, (2) extensive procedures for maintaining accountability over A&E transactions at the base's ASP, (3) internal controls at the unit level to ensure that issued A&E are either expended in training or returned to the ASP, (4) various types of inventory reconciliations, and (5) strengthened physical and procedural security measures at the ASP and on the base.

Although Camp Pendleton has strengthened its A&E controls, it needs to further improve its policies and procedures, especially at the unit level, and to ensure greater compliance with them to reduce thefts.

Camp Pendleton Has Strengthened Its A&E Controls

Our review showed that generally the appropriate A&E procedures are being followed and provide a substantial measure of control at Camp Pendleton. The base had recently made certain improvements to its A&E controls, and it quickly made other changes based on concerns we raised regarding its policies and procedures during our review. However, some A&E are still being stolen and further improvements in controls are necessary.

Improved Controls in Response to Recent Thefts

Camp Pendleton has made several improvements to its A&E controls since the recent thefts.

- The standard operating procedures for the ASP now require verification by telephone with the training unit's responsible officer, at the time of issue, of (1) the individuals authorized to receive A&E and (2) the items and quantities requisitioned.
- Commissioned or warrant officers, rather than noncommissioned officers, now have the primary responsibility, accountability, and control over A&E at the training ranges. They must also verify and receipt for A&E at firing sites and account for all expenditures and for turn-ins of unused A&E.
- The unit A&E receipts and expenditures report has been modified to include all of the data necessary to provide independent verification that A&E recorded as taken off the ranges were returned to the ASP.

Improved Controls in Response to GAO Findings

The base made two other changes in response to certain weaknesses we identified in the A&E requisitioning process during our review.

Units are authorized specific quantities of A&E for training each year. Throughout the year, they requisition the A&E for specific training events when needed. Therefore, the requisitions need to be accurate and also checked against the units authorized A&E account balances to ensure that the A&E being requisitioned are authorized.

During our review A&E requisitions were being approved before account balances were checked to see if the amount of A&E requisitioned was authorized. This deficiency was corrected when we brought it to the attention of base officials. The Infantry School must now submit its A&E requisitions to the ordnance officer, who ensures that the requisitions are accurate and that the school's authorized A&E account balances are sufficient to cover the requisitions. Also, the ordnance office of the 1st Marine Division now checks a unit's authorized A&E account balances before approving requisitions.

A&E Continue to Be Recovered From Unauthorized Locations

A&E continue to be recovered from unauthorized locations; the actual amount that has escaped the base's control, however, is not known because A&E not returned to the ASP is generally considered to have been consumed during training. Therefore, additional management attention and action are needed at the base to improve its control of A&E and reduce the opportunity for theft.

Because some A&E items are extremely dangerous, the theft of even a small amount of them can be a serious problem. Camp Pendleton's Explosive Ordnance Disposal team either picked up or received about 16,000 A&E items during an approximate 3-year period (ending September 15, 1987). These items were generally found in unauthorized areas, either on the base, in surrounding communities, or turned in to the team by various law enforcement agencies. The items recovered included 14,600 rounds of various small-arms ammunition and the other 1,400 items included such explosives as 65 TNT supplementary charges. Table 2.1 shows selected types and quantities of A&E recovered from unauthorized locations from January 1 through September 15, 1987.

Table 2.1: Selected Types and Quantities of A&E Recovered From Unauthorized Locations (January 1 Through September 15, 1987)[a]

Quantity in pounds

Type of ordnance	Quantity
Explosives (HE)	
TNT	4
TNT supplementary charges (1/4-lb TNT)	37
81-mm high-explosive round	2
20-mm high-explosive round	5
2.75" high-explosive rocket	1
Other rockets	
2.75" practice rocket	3
Grenades	
Smoke	8
Tear gas	4
Illumination	1
Practice	2
Other rounds	
60-mm illumination	7
40-mm flare	1
40-mm (practice)	12
20-mm (practice)	3
Various small-arms rounds[b]	3,660

[a]Does not include A&E involving the Marine corporal

[b]Includes a mixture of live and blank rounds varying from 5.56-mm to .50 caliber

Because some of the A&E items were recovered outside the base, and because of the difficulty of tracing the origin of stolen A&E, we could not determine how many items actually came from Camp Pendleton. However, about 47 percent of the provost marshal's total ordnance cases for January 1983 through March 1987 involved illegal possession, and according to the provost marshal, most of these resulted from random searches of vehicles on the base.

Given the quantity of A&E found during random vehicle inspections, some of the unsearched vehicles leaving the base are likely carrying A&E items as well. Therefore, the A&E recovered outside the base also may have been stolen from there.

According to Camp Pendleton officials, they probably cannot totally prevent thefts of A&E; however, they are concerned about all such thefts, and they are trying to minimize them.

Uncorrected Control Weaknesses

We identified other A&E control weaknesses at Camp Pendleton that were not corrected by the completion of our fieldwork because officials were determining appropriate corrective measures. Specifically, we found the following:

- Range inspections were not thorough, and physical searches of Marines after training exercises were not required and, therefore, were not always being done.
- Units did not sufficiently emphasize and monitor internal inspections of their A&E control and management practices.
- The ordnance office did not reduce A&E allocation balances as requisitions were approved.
- The ASP signature verification record needed to be monitored more closely to ensure legible signatures are obtained.
- The range safety officer training course did not provide sufficient instruction on A&E procedures.

Inspections Were Not Thorough Enough to Prevent Thefts of A&E From Training Ranges

A&E were found on the base and in the surrounding communities. Some of this A&E was taken from the training ranges. The opportunity for theft from the training ranges exists because required range inspections were not thorough and regular physical searches of Marines leaving the ranges, while allowed at the discretion of commanding officers, were not required; therefore, they were not always done.

Much of the A&E that was confiscated and returned during 1987 had been picked up on the training ranges or smuggled out during training. According to the Naval Investigative Service and the provost marshal's office, Marines caught with stolen A&E have been obtaining it during range exercises.

Cursory Range Inspections Offer Opportunities for Theft

Units are required to clean up training ranges immediately after their exercises. Marines are supposed to pick up any expended brass, misfired rounds, and other debris in the area and dispose of them; live rounds found during this clean up are to be returned to the ASP. After the unit has left the area, inspectors from the base's Training Facilities Office inspect the range. According to Office officials, though, it does not have enough inspectors to make thorough range searches. The Office's two inspectors are responsible for all the ranges, which cover 196 square miles; consequently, inspections are generally quick visual surveys. The

inspectors drive to a range, look things over, and—if there is "no obvious trash"—report that the range has been inspected. No thorough search for unexpended A&E is usually made.

With such cursory inspections by the Office, A&E could easily remain on the range, especially if deliberately hidden. During our physical inspections, we found several rounds of live and blank ammunition on ranges.

Physical Search of Marines Were Not Always Being Done

The commands at Camp Pendleton did not have standard operating procedures that specifically require units to physically search their Marines before leaving the range, though unit commanders are empowered to do so. For example, the 1st Marine Division's operating procedures for A&E require the unit commander to "establish procedures which ensure recovery of all live ordnance and empty brass, links, etc., prior to leaving the firing site." Similar language appears in the operating procedures of the other commands. Some units have made physical searches of their Marines to deter theft of A&E, but such searches are not required; therefore, they are not always done.

We identified several cases where the A&E had been taken from the training ranges. Of nine Naval Investigative Service cases of unauthorized possession which we reviewed, five involved Marines who admitted taking A&E during exercises on the ranges. The items were generally carried away in backpacks and consisted mainly of small amounts of small-arms ammunition, smoke grenades, booby-trap simulators, and signaling devices. In two of these cases, the Marines had also stolen larger items, such as 24 40-mm practice rounds, a 20-mm practice round, and some high-explosive incendiary rounds.

Results of Internal Inspections Procedures

Internal inspections are intended to help management detect and correct instances of noncompliance with regulations; they also demonstrate to the units the command interest and emphasis on correct practices. The commands at the base regularly conduct Supply and Maintenance Assistance Team inspections of compliance with A&E practices.

We analyzed 34 reports of inspections conducted between February 1985 and May 1987 on units in the 1st Marine Division. The reports showed that oftentimes the regulations were not being complied with. For example, at least one-third of the inspections found that units had not (1) properly maintained their A&E accountability records, (2) submitted training A&E requests early enough for support activities to react,

and (3) set controls over issue and receipt of security guards' ammunition by type, lot, and quantity when the ammunition was out of the control area; maintained proper accountability records over that ammunition; and performed proper checks to determine the condition status of security guards' ammunition.

Ordnance Office Not Reducing A&E Account Balances When Requisitions Approved

As previously noted, the Marine Corps Base Command's ordnance office had implemented control procedures to ensure that authorized A&E account balances for various units were sufficient to cover their requisitions. However, we found that the office was not reducing units' A&E account balances as their requisitions were approved, thereby allowing units to exceed their allocations. Instead, the ordnance office was reducing the account balances when it received a copy of the issue document from the ASP. As a result, various units had overdrawn their allocations for several different types of A&E. For example, the Infantry Training School had overdrawn some of its small-arms ammunition allocations by about 158,000 rounds and some of its 60-mm round allocations were overdrawn by 575 rounds. Other items were also overdrawn but in lesser quantities. Allowing units to draw more A&E than they are authorized for training increases the potential for theft.

When we brought this to its attention, the ordnance office agreed to change its procedures and reduce the authorized A&E account balances when it approved requisitions rather than waiting for a document from the ASP showing that the A&E was issued.

Verification of Signatures Hampered by Illegible Signatures

The ASP and the major commands ordnance offices maintain a signature card file on all persons authorized to request or receive A&E. This file, known as delegation-of-authority cards, is used to verify the identity of persons and legitimacy of documents throughout the supply process. For example, when the ordnance office receives a requisition, it verifies the signature on the requisition by checking it against the unit's delegation-of-authority cards. The ASP is also required to compare the name and signature on the ammunition technician's military identification card with the unit's delegation-of-authority cards before issuing requisitioned A&E.

Failure to obtain legible authorized signatures can leave A&E vulnerable to theft, as happened in a recent case. A Marine corporal allegedly forged an authorizing official's signature on at least seven different requisitions.

Of the 21 delegation-of-authority cards we reviewed, matching the signatures on the cards with the signatures on the requisitions was very difficult, because the signatures on the cards overlapped or ran together. Each signature must be legible if the delegation-of-authority card is to be used to verify authorized signatures.

Training on A&E Procedures Inadequate for Range Safety Officers

The base's range safety officer certification course did not sufficiently emphasize control procedures for A&E. The range safety officer is the person chiefly responsible for control and accountability of A&E after it has been issued to the unit, so this person needs to be thoroughly familiar with the necessary responsibilities, policies, and procedures. During our visit, however, we observed a certification course that did not provide the necessary information or emphasis on A&E accountability practices. For example:

- The course gave only a quick explanation of the receipt-and-expenditures report form, but did not emphasize its purpose, the responsibilities associated with A&E accountability, or what accountability on the range involves.
- The presentation on responsibilities was given by an officer who was unfamiliar with the material and unable to answer several of the questions asked about A&E control by prospective range safety officers.
- The class materials provided to the participants included no information on accountability procedures or the preparation of the receipt-and-expenditures report.

According to Camp Pendleton officials, the course was the first one that discussed the A&E receipt-and-expenditures report.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Although Camp Pendleton has made several improvements to tighten A&E controls, control weaknesses remain. These weaknesses could permit the loss of A&E. The weaknesses we found included: inadequate range inspections and failure to search Marines for A&E when they leave the ranges, insufficient use of the results of internal inspections, untimely reductions of A&E unit allocation balances, inadequate verification of signatures, and insufficient instruction on A&E management for range safety officers.

To strengthen control over A&E, we recommend that the Commanding General, Camp Pendleton, take appropriate action to

- ensure that range inspections are more thorough and that Marines are regularly searched for A&E before they leave the ranges after training exercises,
- ensure the base's procedures for controlling A&E are complied with,
- require the Marine Corps Base Command's ordnance office to update its units' A&E account balances when their requisitions are approved,
- require that the delegation-of-authority cards be monitored more closely to ensure that legible signatures are obtained, and
- improve the range safety officer training course so that it emphasizes A&E accountability and provides guidance for certifying A&E expenditures on training ranges.

Agency Comments and Our Evaluation

In commenting on a draft of this report, the Department of Defense (DOD) generally agreed with most of our findings and recommendations and provided information on actions taken or planned to correct problems and implement our recommendations. However, DOD stated that our report implied that thefts of A&E may be pervasive and significant and it disagreed with that implication. DOD noted that finding A&E in unauthorized locations does not alone prove theft; however, it does indicate controls need to be strengthened and/or properly executed and enforced. We agree and have modified our report.

In agreeing with the draft report's findings and recommendations, DOD noted that improved controls have significantly strengthened the accountability over A&E at Camp Pendleton, even though A&E continue to be recovered from unauthorized locations.

DOD agreed that thorough range inspections and random routine physical searches of Marines as they leave the training area are essential. Accordingly, the Commanding General, Camp Pendleton, has already taken action to ensure range inspections are more thorough. He has increased the number of range inspectors from two to six and requested higher authorities to make this change permanent. Increased emphasis has also been placed on the conduct of range inspections and the use of physical searches during range safety officer training.

DOD concurred that the services' regulations should be strictly adhered to and the results of internal inspections acted upon promptly. Accordingly, the Commanding General, Camp Pendleton, has taken action to

ensure A&E procedures are complied with. DOD pointed out that presently all units are properly completing the receipt-and-expenditures report and returning a copy to the unit's responsible ammunition section for reconciliation. Major command ordnance officers are monitoring these reports. Supply and Maintenance Assistance Teams continue to emphasize A&E procedures during their visits.

DOD agreed that overdraft of unit accounts can be avoided by adjusting records at the time requisitions are approved. To ensure this, the Commanding General, Camp Pendleton, has taken action to have his ordnance office update the unit's A&E account balances when requisitions are approved.

DOD agreed that the failure to obtain good samples of authorized signatures leaves A&E vulnerable to theft, but disagreed with the proposal in our draft report that the delegation-of-authority card be modified to facilitate legible signatures. DOD said that increased command attention and supervision will be given to the delegation-of-authority cards, by ensuring that more legible signatures are obtained. After considering DOD's comments, we revised our recommendation.

DOD concurred that range safety officers must know the implications of lost ordnance and procedures related to A&E accountability and that this information should be included in their formal training. The Commanding General, Camp Pendleton, has taken action to improve the range safety officer training course. Greater emphasis is placed on ensuring that individuals understand the role of the range safety officer as it pertains to A&E accountability.

Major Strengths and Weaknesses in Fort Bragg and Camp Pendleton Controls Over Ammunition and Explosives

We reviewed Fort Bragg's controls over A&E in 1986 and recommended certain changes to strengthen those controls. Even though Fort Bragg has improved its control of A&E, weaknesses still remain and A&E continue to be found in unauthorized locations. Policies, procedures, and practices still exist which make Fort Bragg's A&E vulnerable to theft, mainly because they discourage units from returning unused A&E to the more stringent control of the ammunition supply point. Camp Pendleton, in contrast, has stronger controls that facilitate the immediate return of unused ammunition and explosives to its ASP. However, Fort Bragg's procedures require regular physical searches of all soldiers for A&E before they leave the ranges after training, while Camp Pendleton's procedures do not require a search.

Fort Bragg Has Improved Its A&E Controls

Since our 1986 review, Fort Bragg has taken several actions that have improved its A&E controls. The most significant improvement was the reduction in A&E issued, which resulted from Fort Bragg's use of Army weapons training standards. These standards set forth the amounts of A&E authorized for specific types of training.

As table 3.1 shows, since fiscal year 1985, issues of some A&E items were decreased considerably. (Appendix I contains a more detailed list of A&E items authorized and issued.) As the amount of A&E authorized and issued for training is reduced to what is actually needed, the opportunity to divert A&E without detection greatly decreases.

Table 3.1: Fort Bragg Amounts of A&E Issued for Training for Selected Items
(Fiscal Years 1985-87)

Item	FY 1985	FY 1986	FY 1987
C-4 plastic explosive (1-1/4-pound blocks)	3,547	3,294	3,334
TNT (1/4-pound blocks)	9,780	3,949	2,678
Fragmentation grenades	19,222	6,661	3,487
Detonating cord (feet)	220,285	158,209	136,681
5.56-mm ball ammunition (rounds)	5,531,146	3,289,229	2,856,629

Other improvements were the following:

- The ASP established a consolidated ammunition office and a central issue facility. The office (1) checks unit A&E requisitions against their authorizations, (2) reorders A&E, and (3) validates authorization of the person picking up A&E. The central issue facility assembles the A&E requisitioned by a unit in one location before pick up.

- The number of Quality Assurance Specialists and Ammunition Surveillance inspections were increased. These inspections provide a means of monitoring unit compliance with A&E regulations and procedures.
- Fort Bragg placed a greater emphasis on the collection of A&E and residue from ranges after training exercises. We visited 10 training ranges and observation points and found no A&E and practically no expended brass casings or other residue.

These improvements should increase control of A&E, but further improvements are needed because A&E continue to be recovered from unauthorized locations both on and off the base.

Recoveries of A&E From Unauthorized Locations Continue but at a Reduced Level

A&E continue to be recovered from unauthorized locations; the actual amount that has escaped Fort Bragg's control, however, is not known because A&E not returned to the ammunition supply point are generally considered to have been consumed during training. Therefore, additional management attention and action are needed at the base to improve its control of A&E and reduce the opportunity for theft. The amount of A&E recovered from unauthorized locations in fiscal year 1987 significantly decreased from the previous year (see tables 3.2 and 3.3). However, Fort Bragg continues to lose explosives, small-arms ammunition, and pyrotechnic devices. Most recovered losses were made by Fort Bragg's 18th Explosive Ordnance Disposal detachment and through the base's amnesty program.

During fiscal years 1986 and 1987, Fort Bragg's Explosive Ordnance Disposal detachment responded to 264 incidences involving military A&E found on and off the base. (These incidents were exclusive of those involving Fort Bragg's training ranges to routinely clear misfired explosive items.) Of these incidences, 178 were to recover items found in unauthorized locations on base; 48 to recover items found by police or other authorities in and around Fayetteville, North Carolina; and 38 to recover items found by authorities in other North Carolina localities.

Because Fort Bragg's Explosive Ordnance Disposal detachment is responsible for recovering A&E throughout North Carolina and because it is extremely difficult to trace the origins of stolen A&E, it is not possible to determine whether all the recovered items came from Fort Bragg. In addition, units from other services and reserve component units frequently train at the base and could have been responsible for some of the A&E recovered from unauthorized locations. However, the Bureau of

Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms, the Army's Criminal Investigation Division, and Fort Bragg's provost marshal's office also made recoveries, which they were able to trace to Fort Bragg's soldiers.

In addition to the recoveries made by law enforcement agencies, at least 372 cases in fiscal years 1986 and 1987 involved items that were turned in to Fort Bragg officials under its amnesty program. The program allows individual soldiers and units to turn in A&E items to designated Army authorities without being questioned as to their source or being punished for possessing the unauthorized items. These recoveries are further evidence that Fort Bragg's A&E controls still need improvement. However, the amount of A&E recovered through the program during fiscal year 1987 was significantly less than that recovered during fiscal year 1986. Tables 3.2 and 3.3 show the A&E that were recovered from unauthorized locations both on and off the base and from the amnesty program, respectively. As noted in our 1986 report, we are not certain what portion of total A&E losses these recoveries represent, since the universe of lost and stolen A&E is unknown.

Table 3.2: A&E Recovered From Unauthorized Locations (Fiscal Years 1986 and 1987)[a]

Type of ordnance	Items recovered FY 1986		FY 1987	
Explosives				
Anti-personnel mines	35		1	
Light anti-armor weapon	none		2	
Rockets 2.75	1		3	
Rockets 3.5	none		1	
C-4 plastic	149	pounds	2.5	pounds
Detonating cord	1,082	feet	370	feet
TNT	141.5	pounds	23.5	pounds
Military dynamite	none		6	
Supplementary charges	164	pounds	29.5	pounds
Blasting caps	294		53	
Projectiles[b]	84		108	
Grenades				
Fragmentation	13		3	
Smoke	97		34	
Riot	20		13	
Other	5		4	
Small-arms ammunition				
5.56-mm ball	14,000	rounds	2,022	rounds
5.56-mm blank	17,731	rounds	25,015	rounds
7.62-mm ball	2,462	rounds	776	rounds
7.62-mm blank	4,409	rounds	14,840	rounds
9-mm ball	none		3	rounds
.45 caliber	5	rounds	46	rounds
Miscellaneous	1,216	rounds	395	rounds
Pyrotechnic items	549		861	

[a]As developed from Army Criminal Investigation Division files, provost marshal's office records, and Explosive Ordnance Disposal detachment responses to reports of ordnance found on and off base, exclusive of misfired items on ranges.

[b]Includes high-explosive and white phosphorous 20-mm to 155-mm projectiles, 24 for 1986 and 26 for 1987.

Table 3.3: Amnesty Program A&E Recoveries (Fiscal Years 1986 and 1987)

Type of ordnance	Total[a]		Total	
Hand grenades				
Smoke	151		25	
Riot	29		none	
Fragmentation	1		none	
C-4 plastic explosive	50	pounds	30.5	pounds
Detonating cord	2,030	feet	200	feet
Blasting caps	443		22	
Explosive TNT supplementary charges	93		none	
Pyrotechnic items	1,592		2,535	
Small-arms ammunition				
5.56-mm ball	29,503	rounds	6,654	rounds
7.62-mm ball	4,462	rounds	481	rounds
9-mm ball	199	rounds	none	
.45 caliber	2,106	rounds	none	

[a]For first 11 months of fiscal year 1986 because September 1986 records had been destroyed

Fort Bragg Practices Have a Negative Effect on the Return of A&E and Weaken Controls

Certain practices at Fort Bragg continue to have a negative effect on units returning unused A&E to the ammunition supply point and increase opportunities for theft.

Fort Bragg's ASP uses a reconciliation process in an attempt to ensure that A&E issued to a unit is either used in training or returned to the ASP at the end of training. However, the process is cumbersome for units turning in their A&E. In addition, the ASP's operating hours are too short for A&E returns. As a result, measures meant to provide control of A&E actually weaken control.

Fort Bragg's reconciliation procedures require units to return all unused A&E within 24 hours and residue within 7 working days after completion of training to the ASP, where they are reconciled with the A&E issued. This reconciliation is intended to ensure that all A&E are used only for legitimate purposes and is kept within the control system. In theory, the process is sound, but in practice the reconciliation process is time-consuming and unreliable, providing little assurance that all issued A&E can be accounted for.

As we reported in November 1986, Fort Bragg's reconciliation process has a negative effect on returning A&E. The reconciliation of A&E residue averages 4 hours to complete—and longer, if A&E are returned. This

time-consuming reconciliation creates an incentive for units either to use all issued A&E (even if that means waste) or to claim it was used and discard it rather than return it to the ASP.

Most of Fort Bragg's A&E issues are reconciled after training, but the process does not verify that the A&E were used in training. For example, units using small-arms ammunition drawn from the ASP must return the brass casings of the expended rounds, but there is no way to verify that the returned casings came from the ammunition issued. Anyone wishing to steal live rounds could collect the brass casings left on the range during training and substitute those discarded casings for live rounds to satisfy reconciliation requirements. This switch is particularly easy to make since the ASP accepts all brass casings, even those obviously very old.

In the draft of our 1986 report, we recommended that the Army eliminate its reconciliation process for small-arms ammunition residue. We found that the process did not provide assurance that A&E were used in training because there was no way of verifying that the returned casings came from the ammunition issued. Anyone wishing to steal live rounds could purchase casings in stores and substitute them for live rounds to satisfy reconciliation requirements. We did not include a recommendation in our final report because DOD said that the Army and Fort Bragg were implementing our recommendation.

In April 1988, the Army informed us that it had given its major commands the authority to relieve their subordinate commands of the responsibility of reconciling the residue. However, Fort Bragg was still reconciling its A&E residue because its major command, the Forces Command, had not relieved Fort Bragg of that responsibility. According to Forces Command officials, they did not relieve their subordinate commands of this responsibility because they believe the residue reconciliation process results in the residue and discarded live rounds of ammunition being removed from the ranges more thoroughly and put back into the system so that the residue can be sold. In addition, they said that they wanted all of their soldiers trained in A&E control procedures before they consider eliminating the residue reconciliation process.

The length of Fort Bragg's reconciliation process is not the only hindrance; however, the ASP's limited operating hours often discourage units from immediately returning A&E. The ASP's normal working hours are 7:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., a period that can be too short for units to

complete reconciliation. Rather than staying open until reconciliation has been completed, the ASP provides units a temporary ammunition holding area within its compound, where units can store live A&E for up to 10 days. This also provides units that do not reach the ASP before closing time a place to store A&E until the next day. These practices do not encourage a sense of urgency in returning A&E, and they prolong the period of unit control over A&E, thereby providing more opportunities for the theft of such items.

Even if the reconciliation process was always followed and the holding area eliminated, it would not ensure that unused A&E were returned to the ASP. Fort Bragg does not provide an independent and separate means of documenting that A&E reported as unused on the range is returned to the ASP. As such, residue items obtained from the ranges, local surplus stores, and other commercial sources can be used to satisfy reconciliation requirements, especially when units are permitted 7 days to produce the residue. If reconciliation should reveal a shortage, the unit can request a 24-hour grace period to retrieve and turn in the required residue without additional documentation. If shortages still exist after the grace period, the records may be reconciled without the required residue by the unit commander certifying in a signed statement that the A&E was expended in training. Fort Bragg officials said that they have to reconcile A&E residue as long as Forces Command requires it.

In comparing Fort Bragg's practices to those at Camp Pendleton, we found that Camp Pendleton does not require units to produce residue as proof of A&E use. Instead, it concentrates on the return of the unused A&E and relies on the integrity of commissioned officers—the range safety officer and the range officer-in-charge—to observe and formally certify the quantities expended. Expended small-arms brass is collected from the ranges and periodically turned in by the units to the Defense Reutilization and Marketing Office at Camp Pendleton, but only for sale as scrap metal, not as proof of use. In our opinion, Camp Pendleton's procedures are better because the reconciliation of A&E residue has a negative effect on the return of A&E.

If properly implemented, Camp Pendleton's receipt-and-expenditures reports and turn-in documents could provide an independent means of comparing the types and quantities of A&E reported as not used at the ranges with those actually turned in to and receipted for by the ASP. The reports and turn-in documents could provide an audit trail of all A&E issued from the ASP, used in training, and returned to the ASP. The units' copies and the ASP's copies are later reconciled to ensure that the ASP

received the quantities of A&E returned by the units. Moreover, Camp Pendleton's ASP accepts A&E returns 24 hours a day. According to ASP officials, this practice encourages return of unused A&E and reduces the likelihood that units will unnecessarily expend A&E or leave it on the ranges to avoid the turn-in process. It also limits the time that the A&E is under unit control after training is finished.

Storage of A&E on Unit Premises Weakens Control

When the ASP issues A&E for training, A&E are most vulnerable to theft because accountability is transferred from the ASP, where controls and security are stringent, to the unit where controls and security are weaker. Therefore, units need to return unused A&E to the ASP immediately after training has been completed. However, Fort Bragg's unit commanders can temporarily store small-arms ammunition and pyrotechnics for as long as 10 days in the rooms where they store their weapons. Permanent or long-term storage of ammunition for guards' weapons is also permitted, though it must be authorized in writing by the Ammunition Surveillance Office.

Of the 613 inspections conducted by Fort Bragg's Quality Assurance Specialists and Ammunition Surveillance inspectors during fiscal year 1987, 245 cited one or more deficiencies in handling A&E. Storage of A&E on unit premises without proper authorization was cited in 50 of the 245 inspections.

In contrast, the Marine Corps does not authorize units to store A&E outside the ASP. All A&E, except guard ammunition used for security purposes, are stored at the ASP where controls are stringent.

Fort Bragg's Amnesty Program May Impair Control of A&E

Fort Bragg operates a continuous amnesty program to retrieve A&E in someone's unauthorized possession; Camp Pendleton does not offer amnesty. The amnesty program allows individual soldiers and units to return A&E, before they are caught with it, without questions about its source and without punishment for unauthorized possession. According to officials, the goal is to retrieve the A&E, not to catch and punish offenders. By offering amnesty, Fort Bragg is recovering some A&E acquired through unauthorized means. Camp Pendleton, on the other hand, does not have an amnesty program. The Commanding General of Camp Pendleton's 1st Marine Division, referring to the requirement to return all unused A&E to the ASP immediately after training events, stated that anyone found with A&E afterwards would be punished. In his

opinion, an amnesty program would imply that unauthorized possession would be tolerated.

In commenting on a draft of this report, DOD stated that the Fort Bragg amnesty program is designed to ensure maximum recovery of A&E that has escaped the system. It provides an authorized procedure for return of this material and reduces the real and more dangerous possibility of unauthorized disposal in public dumps, lakes and streams, or random burial sites. DOD apparently also felt our report implied that we believed that material recovered in this manner was stolen and disagreed with our statement that the amnesty program may encourage some soldiers to steal A&E. We recognize that A&E recovered through the amnesty program were not necessarily stolen. We also recognize there is no data to indicate whether or not the amnesty program encourages theft and have revised our report accordingly.

A&E Inspections Have Increased, but Noncompliance Continues

As we recommended in 1986, Fort Bragg has increased its inspections of unit compliance with A&E controls from 176 in about 8 months in fiscal year 1986 to 613 in fiscal year 1987. Quality Assurance Specialists and Ammunition Surveillance inspection reports identify which commands are responsible for A&E violations. The main purpose of these inspections is to ensure that units comply with A&E procedures. However, noncompliance with A&E controls has continued. For the approximate 8-month period ending August 29, 1986, the inspectors conducted 176 inspections and 70 (40 percent) showed instances of noncompliance with procedures. Again, in fiscal year 1987, 40 percent (245 of 613) of the inspections found a failure in some way to comply with prescribed procedures for controlling A&E.

Some of the more common problems the inspections found were

- failure to provide physical security for ammunition in unit's control,
- storing ammunition on unit premises without proper authorization, and
- failure to accurately complete the forms required to provide the audit trail necessary for controlling A&E.

Each inspection report identifies the unit inspected, its command, and the specific areas in which the unit is not in compliance with regulations. Although Fort Bragg's Director of Logistics analyzed the fiscal year 1987 inspection reports and identified the most common discrepancies, he did not identify the commands or units committing them. His

comments, distributed to the commands, stated that

"... there were no discernable trends during the period. The percentage of discrepancies remained fairly constant throughout FY 87. Units receiving the most discrepancies appeared to be those units most often using the ranges and training areas. All commands inspected are furnished a copy of the inspection results .... Commanders are encouraged to get involved in ammunition accountability and security procedures to help decrease noted discrepancies."

We believe the high percentage of inspections citing deficiencies among Fort Bragg's units to properly secure, store, and account for A&E demonstrates a need for further education, monitoring, and enforcement of regulations. It also shows a need for punitive actions against those failing to follow regulations among the five major subordinate commands and the off-base units using Fort Bragg's training facilities.

Searches Before Leaving Training Ranges

Fort Bragg's procedures require regular physical searches of all soldiers for A&E before they leave the ranges after training. In contrast, Camp Pendleton's procedures do not require a search, but leave it to the discretion of commanding officers as to whether searches are needed.

Conclusions and Recommendations

In comparing A&E controls at Camp Pendleton and Fort Bragg, we found that although both bases had improved their controls, both control systems still have opportunities for improvement.

Fort Bragg's reconciliation process, the limited operating hours of its ASP, and its holding area discourage units from returning unused A&E. Furthermore, since the opportunity for theft of A&E is greatest when it leaves ASP control, storing unit A&E in a temporary holding area or on unit premises rather than immediately returning it to ASP control increases the opportunity for theft. Also, not providing a separate, independent verification of unused A&E leaving the ranges for turn-in to the ASP leaves A&E vulnerable to theft. In contrast, Camp Pendleton's turn-in practices facilitate timely return of unused A&E and provide fewer opportunities for theft.

In the draft of our 1986 report, we recommended to DOD that the Army eliminate its reconciliation process for small-arms ammunition residue. We did not include this recommendation in our final report because DOD

said that the Army and Fort Bragg were implementing our recommendation. However, our current work showed that this recommendation has not been implemented and Fort Bragg is still reconciling A&E residue.

Fort Bragg conducts more thorough and extensive inspections than does Camp Pendleton. Even though Fort Bragg increased its Quality Assurance inspections as we recommended in 1986, it has not corrected reported deficiencies. For the 20 months examined, the percentage of inspected units with discrepancies remained at about 40 percent. Similarly, Camp Pendleton had not corrected deficiencies disclosed by its inspection reports.

To strengthen Fort Bragg's program for assuring adequate controls over A&E, we recommend the following:

- The Secretary of the Army eliminate the reconciliation of small-arms ammunition residue.
- The Commanding General, Fort Bragg,
  - expand the ASP's hours of operation to enable immediate return of unused A&E to its control,
  - authorize the use of holding areas for A&E under unit control only when necessary for operational commitments and require proper safeguards be applied to A&E when under such unit control, and
  - monitor the results of the Quality Assurance Specialists and Ammunition Surveillance inspections and enforce compliance among those units and commands found to deviate from prescribed A&E regulations and procedures.

Agency Comments and Our Evaluation

In commenting on a draft of this report, DOD generally agreed with our findings and recommendations and provided information on actions taken or planned to correct problems and implement our recommendations.

DOD agreed that any A&E not under proper control are unacceptable and noted that the amount of A&E recovered at Fort Bragg from unauthorized locations and through the amnesty program has decreased significantly from previous years. It expressed the view that this downward trend strongly indicated that the continuing efforts to improve procedures are reducing the amount of uncontrolled A&E.

DOD agreed that the reconciliation of small-arms ammunition residue should be eliminated, and pointed out that while the Army eliminated

the reconciliation requirement in November 1986, Fort Bragg continued the process because the Forces Command requires it. DOD said that Fort Bragg procedures for the reconciliation of small-arms residue are being revised and will result in a reduction of time required to accomplish turn-in actions. Although this is a first step, we continue to believe that the reconciliation process should be eliminated.

DOD agreed that Fort Bragg should expand its ammunition supply point's hours of operation to enable immediate return of unused A&E and stated that Fort Bragg plans to expand its supply point's operating hours as we recommended.

DOD disagreed with the proposal in our draft report that A&E holding areas and storage of A&E on unit premises should be eliminated at Fort Bragg. It pointed out that most units at Fort Bragg plan to start training or to conduct range firing in the early morning. If the ASP did not have a holding area, the ASP would not be able to issue A&E to all units early enough to conduct training. If no holding area existed, units would continue to draw ammunition from the ASP the day prior to range firing or training, but would temporarily store and guard the ammunition on the range overnight. This is much less secure than utilizing the current holding area within the ASP.

DOD said that plans are to restrict the use of the holding area to temporary storage of issued A&E pending pickup by units for early morning training. Unused A&E will be turned in to the ASP as soon as training has been completed. DOD also pointed out that there are conditions under which units have a valid need to store small quantities of ammunition for short periods of time. We agreed with the concerns raised by DOD and have modified our recommendation.

DOD agreed that Fort Bragg needed to monitor inspection results and enforce compliance among those units and commands found to deviate from prescribed A&E regulations and procedures. Accordingly, Fort Bragg's Director of Logistics has been delegated the authority to monitor overall ammunition accountability and controls for Fort Bragg.

Camp Pendleton's Improved Controls Should Prevent Large-Scale Thefts of Combat Gear

Since Operation RIPSTOP, Camp Pendleton has tightened its control of combat gear. These controls include additional physical security, greater involvement of commanders in property management, additional training, inspections, and inventories. If implemented and enforced, these planned controls should prevent thefts like those that occurred during RIPSTOP. However, some minor weaknesses need to be corrected to further strengthen the Marine Corps' control of combat gear at Camp Pendleton.

Operation RIPSTOP

Between 1981 and 1984, law enforcement officials conducted RIPSTOP, a major sting operation involving government property stolen from Camp Pendleton. RIPSTOP was conducted by the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Naval Investigative Service, in cooperation with the Marine Corps. During RIPSTOP, agents identified individuals suspected of stealing and selling government property, including individual military combat gear (gas masks, flak jackets, first-aid kits, helmets, backpacks, sleeping bags, etc.).

RIPSTOP uncovered and disrupted a national network of military surplus dealers trafficking in stolen military items. It recovered military property valued at about $1.5 million, including items worth almost $0.5 million seized by agents in Oceanside, California, who posed as owners of a surplus business just outside the base. The U.S. Attorney's Office and Camp Pendleton's Judge Advocate General convicted 134 individuals and ordered them to pay more than $300,000 in fines, forfeit about $61,000 in military pay, and pay about $45,000 to the United States as restitution.

In 1982, the Naval Investigative Service estimated that the base's supply shortages attributable to thefts amounted to $1 million annually. That estimate, coupled with the losses uncovered by RIPSTOP, caused the Marine Corps to improve its managerial practices, increase accounting controls, and tighten physical security over government property, including combat gear.

Improvements Made in Controls Over Combat Gear

Since Operation RIPSTOP, Marine Corps headquarters and the two major commands at Camp Pendleton have implemented several measures to improve controls over combat gear, including

- requiring command-level involvement in property control;
- increasing record checks at several supply system levels, inspecting Marines with combat equipment, and inventorying such equipment during inspections; and
- providing additional training and regular briefings on accountability for these items.

Camp Pendleton has also increased the physical security of these items by upgrading and augmenting protective devices (fences, detection systems, etc.), enforcing restrictions on parking close to warehouses, making random vehicle searches, and limiting access to accountability forms, among other measures.

At the time of our review, several units on the base still had not installed physical security measures, such as chain link fencing, security doors, or lighting. However, the commands have submitted work requests for these improvements, which are to be made as funding permits. Also, according to an official with the provost marshal's office, physical security inspections will continue and unit commanders will be kept advised of needed improvements.

Evaluations of Camp Pendleton's Controls

In addition to GAO, the Naval Audit Service, the Marine Corps Inspector General, and the Marine Corps Regional Field Supply and Maintenance Analysis Office have evaluated the Marine Corps' controls over combat gear, including those at Camp Pendleton. Their evaluations addressed supply functions to ensure that controls were complied with and physical security measures were adequate.

During fiscal year 1986, the Naval Audit Service evaluated controls over combat gear at Camp Pendleton. It concluded that the base's control of combat gear was adequate and found no material deficiencies in the controls. It also found that the Inspector General's October 1985 inspection of all commands and units was comprehensive and of good quality, and had the same opinion of other periodic inspections of command and unit supply accounts.

We observed the physical security measures for combat gear at Camp Pendleton and identified no major weaknesses. We also tested the accuracy of inventory records of four battalions and two regiments for selected types of gear stolen during RIPSTOP. With the exception of one battalion, the inventory accuracy rates were within the Marine Corps' 5-percent acceptable error limit and were comparable to those found by

two types of inspections routinely performed on the base—the commanding general inspection and the Supply and Maintenance Assistance Team/Supply Assistance Team inspections.

Since RIPSTOP, commanding generals at Camp Pendleton have intensified and expanded these inspections to evaluate each unit's overall supply accountability. The commanding generals of the Marine Corps Base Command and the 1st Marine Division have also established special inventory teams to evaluate the accuracy of their units' combat gear inventory records. The supply inspection ratings were generally satisfactory, and results of commanding general inspections were within the Marine Corps' 5-percent error limit.

At one battalion, we found over a 13-percent variance between what the records showed and what was on hand for five different types of combat gear inventoried. This battalion was within the 1st Force Service Support Group, a command that did not have a separate inventory team established by the commanding general. Supply inspection reports for three other units within the Support Group showed variances of 6 percent, 16 percent, and 24 percent. The responsible commanding general said that these problems would be corrected immediately and that steps would be taken to prevent such problems from reoccurring.

In addition, we found that temporary loans of combat gear from supply units were not always reported to higher commands for approval and monitoring. It is important that this is done because during RIPSTOP, a Marine staff sergeant borrowed gas masks from various supply units under the guise of need and sold them to surplus stores. To avoid detection, the staff sergeant was running a pyramid scheme by borrowing masks from one unit to pay back another. Requiring command approval for and monitoring of temporary loans of combat gear should help prevent similar thefts in the future.

The 1st Marine Division has a standing order prohibiting the parking of privately owned vehicles within 50 feet of supply buildings, warehouses, and open storage areas; however, we saw a privately owned vehicle with its trunk lid open backed into a warehouse. Investigation revealed that a Marine sergeant had violated the division order. We were told that the sergeant was subsequently relieved of all supply duties, charged with two violations of the Uniform Code of Military Justice, and subjected to a nonjudicial investigation for having violated the parking prohibition.

Provost Marshal's Files Show Thefts Limited to Pilferage

In fiscal year 1987, military police from Camp Pendleton's provost marshal's office responded to 25 complaints concerning stolen combat gear, an increase from 17 complaints during fiscal year 1986. The majority of these complaints were from individual Marines and concerned thefts of single items, such as a poncho or a sleeping bag, from lockers or cars. Thefts from warehouses or supply areas, as occurred in RIPSTOP, were not identified as a problem.

Conclusions

The Marine Corps and Camp Pendleton have instituted numerous measures to increase control over combat gear. Our observations and tests indicate that, if these measures are routinely practiced along with planned physical security improvements, they should be sufficient to prevent large-scale thefts of combat gear.

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Army Authorizations and Fort Bragg Issues for Selected A&E Items (Fiscal Years 1985-87)

Type of ordnance	DOD identification code	STRAC[a] A&E authorizations		A&E issues		
		FY 1986	FY 1987	FY 1985	FY 1986	FY 1987
5.56-mm ball F/M	A059	0	3,986,560	0	0	1,789,540
5.56-mm ball linked	A062	0	67,158	0	0	13,440
5.56-mm 4:1 linked	A064	885,732	1,025,388	756,222	717,665	790,209
5.56-mm ball	A071	6,933,899	3,469,722	5,531,146	3,289,229	2,856,629
.22 Ball LR	A086	172,334	128,645	128,300	104,621	9,184
.22 Ball LR MG	A093	5,000	0	3,777	5,000	0
7.62-mm ball, clip	A130	36,388	32,000	27,016	16,152	7,166
7.62-mm 4:1 linked	A131	2,166,517	2,274,334	2,001,197	1,847,209	1,784,099
7.62-mm ball match	A136	328,273	280,000	267,881	145,231	56,605
7.62-mm ball linked	A143	640,926	529,308	306,042	420,506	505,574
.30 carbine ball	A182	6,000	5,000	4,800	0	1,580
.30 Ball	A212	3,000	3,000	2,300	1,300	400
.30 4:1 linked	A218	6,000	4,000	0	1,800	800
9-mm Ball 116 G-R	A360	280,000	160,000	242,612	202,360	108,107
.38 Special Ball	A400	49,667	12,450	16,483	46,145	61,142
.38 Special Wadcutter	A404	76,832	65,470	72,531	30,086	27,300
.45 Ball	A475	801,381	851,360	845,426	792,224	839,682
.50 Ball Linked	A555	26,622	27,000	0	13,755	16,658
.50 4:1 Linked	A557	160,596	130,000	127,893	83,864	131,527
20-mm TPT	A652	354,480	354,480	252,792	322,469	348,381
40-mm Red Smoke Grenade	B506	933	529	1,205	496	61
40mm Green Smoke Grenade	B508	1,090	900	870	747	512
40-mm Yellow Smoke Grenade	B509	1,099	677	677	626	484
Grenade, Hand Frag	G881	8,020	5,737	19,222	6,661	3,487
Grenade, Hand Riot CS	G922	41	0	7	23	14
Grenade, Hand CS1	G924	475	300	467	276	189
Grenade, Hand Smoke	G930	9,697	8,000	9,780	5,295	7,114
Grenade, Hand Riot	G932	0	0	0	0	0
Grenade, Hand Smoke Green	G940	7,212	7,000	8,391	5,776	6,425
Grenade, Hand Smoke Yellow	G945	6,673	3,200	6,402	6,845	3,714
Grenade, Hand Smoke Red	G950	6,292	5,200	6,715	5,193	4,588
Grenade, Hand Smoke Violet	G955	968	2,000	310	622	1,104
Grenade, Hand CS M7	G963	1,532	1,655	1,560	906	1,003
Mine Apers. M16	K092	133	45	136	77	28

(continued)

Type of ordnance	DOD identification code	STRAC[a] A&E authorizations FY 1986	STRAC[a] A&E authorizations FY 1987	A&E issues FY 1985	A&E issues FY 1986	A&E issues FY 1987
Mine Apers. M14	K121	130	45	201	47	50
Mine Apers. M18	K143	3,144	2,000	1,863	760	208
Mine Apers. M26	K146	30	20	0	12	10
C4 1 1/4 lb.	M023	3,800	3,400	3,547	3,294	3,334
TNT 1/4 lb.	M030	7,043	3,808	9,780	3,949	2,678
TNT 1/2 lb.	M031	517	0	64	50	0
TNT 1 lb.	M032	2,700	2,404	2,648	2,172	2,351
Cap, Blasting Electric	M130	8,520	2,548	7,270	5,480	3,568
Cap, Blasting Nonelectric	M131	11,139	3,056	12,459	7,601	6,002
Detonating Cord	M456	219,000	91,065	220,285	158,209	136,681
Dynamite Military M1	M591	3,300	2,300	5,261	1,827	1,826

[a]Standards Training Commission

Comments From the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Production and Logistics)

ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20301-8000

PRODUCTION AND LOGISTICS

(L/SD)

3 OCT 1988

Mr. Frank C. Conahan
Assistant Comptroller General
National Security and International
Affairs Division
U.S. General Accounting Office
Washington, DC 20548

Dear Mr. Conahan:

This is the Department of Defense (DoD) response to the General Accounting Office (GAO) draft report, "AMMUNITION AND EXPLOSIVES: Improved Controls Are Needed To Reduce Thefts at Fort Bragg and Camp Pendleton," dated August 11, 1988, (GAO Code 391593), OSD Case 7734.

Since the Department policy goal is total accountability of each round of Ammunition and Explosives (A&E), the Department is pleased that the GAO has recognized the substantial progress the Army and Marine Corps have made in improving the control of A&E. While the Department has intensified its inspection and recovery programs the amount of A&E recovered from unauthorized locations is decreasing significantly. Table 3.2 of the GAO report documents significant reductions between FY 1986 and FY 1987 at Fort Bragg, particularly in the more lethal items. This progress is indicative of the constant vigilance and high level management attention the Department has placed on this area.

While the Department generally concurs with most of the draft report findings and recommendations, the Department does not concur with the draft report's implication that thefts of A&E may be pervasive and significant. The report implies that there may be a significant problem; however, during the first 11 months of FY 1986, the amount of A&E recovered in unauthorized locations and through the amnesty program at Fort Bragg, compared to the amount issued, was eight one-hundredths of one percent. Finding material in unauthorized locations does not of itself prove theft; however, it does indicate controls need to be strengthened and/or properly executed and enforced.

Although the report implies that all recovered A&E was stolen, the source, the method by which it was obtained, or the time period acquired cannot be determined from the GAO draft report. The GAO draft report statement that "...the actual amount stolen, however, is not known because A&E not returned to the ASP is generally considered to have been consumed during training," inappropriately implies that the assumption that the A&E has been consumed is incorrect. It would be a serious error to assume that A&E not returned to the Ammunition Supply Point (ASP) has been stolen.

The Department suggests the GAO modify the draft report to state that, "Since A&E continues to be found in unauthorized locations, additional management attention and actions are required to improve controls of A&E and further reduce the opportunity for theft. The recoveries indicate that while the inspection and recovery programs are working, controls over A&E need to be strengthened and/or properly executed and enforced."

The Department's objective is that all A&E be properly controlled to ensure 100 percent accountability, so that no A&E finds its way into unauthorized locations. While the Department procedures and systems are designed to meet this objective, it recognizes that additional effort is required. The Department will continue to take every possible precaution to ensure that A&E is controlled and used strictly for the intended purpose.

The enclosure provides the Department's detailed comments on the reports findings and recommendations. The GAO staff has also separately been provided with additional technical corrections. The DoD appreciates the opportunity to comment on the draft report.

Sincerely,

Jack Katzen
Assistant Secretary of Defense
(Production & Logistics)

Enclosure

GAO DRAFT REPORT - DATED AUGUST 11, 1988
(GAO CODE 391593) OSD CASE 7734

"AMMUNITION AND EXPLOSIVES: IMPROVED CONTROLS ARE NEEDED TO REDUCE THEFTS AT FORT BRAGG AND CAMP PENDLETON"

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE COMMENTS

* * * * *

FINDINGS

FINDING A: Improvements To Ammunition And Explosive Controls At Camp Pendleton. The GAO reported that, as the result of thefts of ammunition and explosives (A&E) in 1986 and 1987, Camp Pendleton has taken several actions to improve its A&E controls. The GAO found that the standard operating procedures for the ammunition supply point (ASP) now require telephone verification, at the time of issue, as to the individuals authorized to receive A&E and the items and quantities requisitioned. The GAO also found that range safety officers must now be warrant or commissioned officers, rather than noncommissioned officers. The GAO further found that the A&E receipts and expenditures report has been modified to include all the data necessary to provide independent verification that the A&E were returned to the ASP. The GAO also reported that Camp Pendleton made two additional changes in response to certain weaknesses the GAO identified in the A&E requisitioning process. To ensure that A&E requisitions are authorized and accurate, the GAO found that the Infantry School must now submit its A&E requisitions to the ordnance officer. According to the GAO, the ordnance officer then ensures that the requisitions are accurate and that the school's authorized A&E balances are sufficient to cover the requisitions. In addition, the GAO reported that the ordnance office of the First Marine Division now checks unit authorized A&E account balances before approving requisitions. The GAO concluded that these changes have strengthened A&E controls at Camp Pendleton. (pp. 2-3, pp. 17-20/GAO Draft Report)

Now on pp. 2-3, 12-13.

DOD RESPONSE: Concur. The Department agrees that the improved controls have significantly strengthened the accountability of A&E at Camp Pendleton.

FINDING B: Stolen A&E Continues To Be Recovered. The GAO found that, although A&E controls at Camp Pendleton have been strengthened, stolen A&E continues to be recovered from unauthorized locations. The GAO noted that the total amount stolen is not known since A&E not returned to the ASP is generally considered to have been consumed. The GAO identified various types and quantities of A&E recovered from unauthorized locations during the period January 1, through September 15, 1987, including explosives, rockets, grenades and ammunition. The GAO reported that, because some of the items were recovered outside the Camp and since the origin of stolen A&E is difficult to trace, it could not be determined how many items actually came from Pendleton. The GAO pointed out, however, that about 47 percent of the provost marshal's total ordnance cases for January 1983 through March 1987 involved illegal possession, and most of these resulted from random searches leaving the Camp. The GAO concluded that, given the quantity of A&E found during the random inspections, it is reasonable to assume that (1) some of the vehicles leaving the Camp are also carrying A&E items and (2) some of the recovered A&E items may have been stolen from there. The GAO acknowledged that Camp Pendleton officials are concerned about all A&E thefts and are trying to minimize them to the maximum extent. (pp. 2-3, pp. 20-22/GAO Draft Report)

Now on pp. 2-3, 13-14

DOD RESPONSE: Partially concur. The Department concurs that although Camp Pendleton officials have emphasized the control of A&E and have instituted tighter controls, A&E continues to be recovered from unauthorized locations. The Department objective is that all A&E be properly controlled to ensure 100 percent accountability such that no A&E finds its way into unauthorized locations. While the Department procedures and systems are designed to meet this objective, in practice it is unreasonable to expect perfection, particularly at training bases where the A&E is handled frequently and in large amounts.

The Department does not concur with the draft report implication that thefts of A&E may be pervasive. The report implies that there may be a significant problem; however, during the first 11 months of FY 1986 the amount of A&E recovered in unauthorized locations and through the amnesty program at Fort Bragg, compared to the amount issued, was eight one-hundredths of one percent. The GAO report states that, "Stolen A&E continues to be recovered from unauthorized locations; the actual amount stolen, however, is not known because A&E not returned to the ASP is generally considered to have been consumed during training." This statement is misleading. First, it

presumes that all A&E recovered from unauthorized locations was stolen. This is not necessarily the case and has not been demonstrated by the GAO. Secondly, while it is true that the actual amount of A&E stolen cannot be determined, the report implies that thefts are frequent and involve significant amounts of A&E. It is never possible for anyone, in Government or outside of Government, to determine how much material has actually been stolen, except in those cases where the property is recovered and/or the thief is apprehended. Finding material in unauthorized locations does not, of itself, prove theft. It does, however, indicate that controls need to be strengthened and/or properly executed and enforced. Although the report implies that all recovered A&E was stolen from Camp Pendleton, the source, the method by which it was obtained, or the time period acquired cannot be determined from the GAO report. Lastly, the GAO report statement that "...actual amount stolen, however, is not known because A&E not returned to the Ammunition Supply Point (ASP) is generally considered to have been consumed during training," inappropriately implies that the assumption that the A&E has been consumed is incorrect. It would be a serious error to assume that A&E not returned to the ASP has been stolen.

The Department suggests that, instead, the report state that, "Since A&E continues to be found in unauthorized locations, additional management attention and actions are required to improve control of A&E and reduce the opportunity for theft. The recoveries indicate that while the inspection and recovery programs are working, controls over A&E need to be strengthened and/or properly executed and enforced." The Department will continue to take every possible precaution to ensure that A&E is used strictly for the purpose for which issued.

FINDING C: Inadequate Range Inspections And Physical Searches. The GAO identified several A&E control weaknesses at Camp Pendleton that had not been corrected because officials were determining appropriate corrective measures. In this regard, the GAO found that range inspections were not thorough, and physical searches of Marines after training exercises were not always done. The GAO found that, although units are required to clean up training ranges immediately after their exercises and have inspections made, there are not enough inspectors to thoroughly search the ranges. The GAO concluded that, it is likely A&E could remain on the range following such cursory inspections. The GAO also found that, although physical searches of Marines leaving the ranges was allowed, it was not always being done, thus providing an opportunity for removing A&E without detection.

3

Now on pp. 3, 15-16.

The GAO identified several examples where Marines had been caught with stolen A&E obtained during range exercises. The GAO pointed out that these procedures are in contrast to Fort Bragg, where more thorough range inspections are done and soldiers are required to be searched before they leave the ranges. (p. 4, pp. 22-25, p. 47/GAO Draft Report)

DOD RESPONSE: Concur. The Department agrees that thorough range inspections and random routine physical searches of Marines as they leave the training areas are essential; however, the method and frequency of these searches should be determined by the Commander of each installation. (See the DoD response to Recommendation 1.)

Now on pp. 3, 16-17.

FINDING D: Internal Inspection Procedures Not Always Followed. The GAO reported that internal inspections are intended to help management detect and correct instances of noncompliance with regulations. The GAO analyzed 34 reports of inspections conducted between February 1985 and May 1987, of units in the First Marine Division. The GAO found that, frequently, the regulations were not being followed. As an example, the GAO reported that at least one third of the inspections found that units had not (1) properly maintained their A&E accountability records, (2) submitted training A&E requests early enough for support activities to react, and (3) set controls, accounted for and performed checks of security guards' ammunition. The GAO concluded that units it reviewed had not sufficiently emphasized and monitored the internal A&E inspections. (p. 4, p. 23, p. 26/GAO Draft Report)

DOD RESPONSE: Concur. The Department concurs that the Services' regulations should be strictly adhered to and the results of internal inspections acted upon promptly. (See the DoD response to Recommendation 2.)

FINDING E: A&E Account Balances Not Reduced When Requisitions Approved. The GAO found that, although control procedures had been implemented to ensure that authorized A&E balances were sufficient to cover requisitions, the ordnance office was not reducing the unit A&E account balances as the requisitions were approved. The GAO found that, instead, the ordnance office was reducing the account balances when a copy of the issue document was received. According to the GAO, this practice resulted in various units overdrawing their allocations for several different types of A&E. The GAO acknowledged, that when this situation was brought to the attention of the ordnance office, the ordnance office agreed to change its

Now on pp. 3, 17

procedures and reduce the authorized A&E account when requisitions are approved. (p. 3, p. 23, p. 27/GAO Draft Report)

DOD RESPONSE: Concur. The Department agrees that overdraft of unit accounts can be avoided by annotating records at the time requisitions are approved. This procedure has been adopted. (See the DoD response to Recommendation 3.)

FINDING F: **Verification Of Authorized Signatures Difficult**. The GAO reported that the ASP and major ordnance commands maintain a signature card file to verify the identity of persons authorized to request or receive A&E. The GAO pointed out that failure to obtain good samples of authorized signatures can leave A&E vulnerable to theft. The GAO found, however, that the card format does not allow enough room for signatures, making it very difficult to match the card signatures with those on the requisitions. The GAO reported that Camp Pendleton officials agreed the signature card was inadequate and said the card would be revised to allow room for

Now on pp. 17-18

legible signatures. (p. 23, pp. 28-29/GAO Draft Report)

DOD RESPONSE: Partially concur. The DoD agrees that failure to obtain good samples of authorized signatures does leave A&E vulnerable to possible theft actions. Increased command attention and supervision will be given to completion of the card, ensuring that more legible signatures are obtained. This action will obviate the need for a new or modified card. (See the DoD response to Recommendation 4.)

FINDING G: **Inadequate Training On A&E Procedures**. The GAO found that the Camp Pendleton range safety officer certification course did not sufficiently emphasize control procedures for A&E. The GAO pointed out that it is important the range safety officer be thoroughly familiar with A&E responsibilities and procedures, since he is the person mainly responsible for A&E control and accountability after it has been issued to the unit. The GAO found, however, that a certification course at Camp Pendleton (1) did not adequately discuss A&E accountability, (2) was given by an officer who was unfamiliar with the material, and (3) class materials lacked information on accountability or preparation of the associated form. The GAO noted that, according to Camp officials, the course was the first one that included the A&E accountability form. (p. 23,

Now on pp. 3, 18

pp. 29-30/GAO Draft Report)

DOD RESPONSE: Concur. The Department concurs that range safety officers must know the implications of lost ordnance and procedures related to A&E accountability and that this information should be included in their formal training. The Commanding General, Camp Pendleton has taken action to improve the Range Safety Officer training course. Greater emphasis is now placed on ensuring that individuals understand the role of the Range Safety Officer as it pertains to A&E accountability. (See the DoD response to Recommendation 5.)

FINDING H: **Improvements In A&E Controls At Fort Bragg**. The GAO noted that, in 1986, it reported on certain changes needed to strengthen A&E controls at Fort Bragg 1/. The GAO found that, since that time, Fort Bragg has taken several actions to improve its A&E controls. According to the GAO, the most significant improvement was due to the establishment of weapons training standards by the Army, which identified the amounts of A&E authorized for specific types of training. The GAO found that this action has significantly reduced the amount of A&E issued for training, thus decreasing the opportunity to divert A&E without detection. The GAO also identified several other improvements by Fort Bragg, including (1) establishment of a consolidated ammunition office and a central issue facility by the ASP, (2) an increase in the number of personnel and inspections to monitor compliance with A&E regulations and procedures, and (3) greater emphasis on the collection of A&E and residue from ranges after training exercises. The GAO concluded that these improvements should increase control of A&E by Fort Bragg. The GAO also concluded that further improvements are needed, however, since A&E continues to be recovered from unauthorized locations both on and off the Fort. (pp. 32-34/GAO Draft Report)

Now on pp. 21-22.

DOD RESPONSE: Concur. A Consolidated Ammunition Office and a Consolidation Point have been established contiguous to the ASP, resulting in customer-turnaround time being reduced at the ASP. As acknowledged by the GAO, the number of Quality Assurance Specialist Ammunition Surveillance (QASAS) inspections were increased during FY 1987 and FY 1988. Command emphasis continues to be placed on the collection of A&E and residue from ranges after training exercises.

1/ GAO/NSIAD-87-44BR, "AMMUNITION AND EXPLOSIVES: Improved Controls and Accountability at Fort Bragg," Dated November 13, 1986 (OSD Case 7162)

Procedures are in effect and enforced for policing ranges after training exercises.

The Department fully agrees with the GAO that having any A&E not under proper control is unacceptable. The Army is continuing efforts to improve and refine policy and procedures related to the control and accountability of A&E. (See the DoD response to Recommendation 6.)

FINDING I: Some Recoveries Of A&E From Unauthorized Locations Continue. The GAO found that, although the amount of A&E recovered from unauthorized locations in FY 1987 significantly decreased from the previous year, Fort Bragg continues to lose some A&E. The GAO reported that most of the losses have been recovered by the Explosives Ordnance Detachment and through the Fort Bragg amnesty program. The GAO pointed out that it is not possible to determine how much of the A&E recovered by the Explosives Ordnance Detachment came from the Fort. In the case of the amnesty program, however, the GAO reported that, in FY 1986 and FY 1987, there were 372 cases where individual soldiers and units turned in A&E items to Fort Bragg officials. Although the GAO acknowledged that the amount of A&E recovered through the amnesty program was significantly less in FY 1987 than in FY 1986, the GAO concluded that these recoveries are further evidence that the Fort Bragg A&E controls still need improvement. (p. 32, pp. 34-38/GAO Draft Report)

Now on pp. 22-25.

DOD RESPONSE: Concur. Types and quantities of A&E recovered in unauthorized locations have decreased significantly from the previous years. The GAO did not provide an age or rate analysis, or identify sources on most A&E recovered, either through the Explosive Ordnance Detachment or the Fort Bragg Amnesty Program. The GAO acknowledged that such analysis was practically impossible. In addition, the time frame of loss in most cases of recovered A&E cannot be pinpointed.

As the GAO noted, there has been a significant drop in the amount of A&E recovered through the amnesty program at Fort Bragg. This downward trend strongly indicates that the continuing efforts to improve and refine procedures are reducing the amount of uncontrolled A&E.

FINDING J: The Effect Of Some Fort Bragg Practices On The Return Of A&E. The GAO reported that the Fort Bragg ASP uses a reconciliation process in an attempt to ensure that A&E issued to a unit is either used in training or returned to the ASP at the end of training. The

GAO found, however, that the reconciliation process is cumbersome and time-consuming, and the reconciliation can be easily circumvented. The GAO also found that the ASP operating hours are too short for units to complete reconciliation. Rather than staying open until reconciliation has been completed, the GAO found that the ASP provides units a temporary ammunition holding area where units can store live A&E for up to ten days. The GAO concluded that these Fort Bragg practices discourage the return of A&E and weaken controls. The GAO further concluded that the practices prolong unit control of A&E items, thereby providing more opportunities for theft. The GAO pointed out that these Fort Bragg practices are in contrast with Camp Pendleton, since Pendleton does not operate a holding area, has a stream-lined return process and accepts ammunition returns 24 hours a day. (pp. 4-5, p. 32, pp. 38-43/GAO Draft Report)

Now on pp. 3-4, 25-28.

DOD RESPONSE: Concur. In November 1986, the Army eliminated the requirement to reconcile small-arms brass as a means of proving expenditures. Residue, however, must still be returned for its salvage/resale value; and by default, assure that ranges are being properly cleaned. To that extent, the procedures contributed to success, as the GAO noted they were unable to find A&E and practically no residue on the ranges. Fort Bragg procedures for the reconciliation of small-arms residue are being revised and will result in a reduction of time required to accomplish turn-in actions. These reductions will permit the ASP to extend its hours of operation. (See the DoD response to Recommendation 7.)

The holding area is an improved area that is fenced, lighted, and has lockable storage containers. Roving security guards are in the ASP 24 hours a day, providing additional security. Further, Category I items are not permitted to be stored in the holding area. The ASP holding area minimizes the time A&E is on vehicles and in the hands of troops, and permits units and ASP personnel to preposition supplies needed for training. Under current procedures, holding areas are authorized for five days and may be extended for an additional five days upon written request from the unit. Additional plans are to restrict the use of the holding area to temporary storage of issued A&E pending pickup by units for early morning training. Live turn-in of A&E will be made as soon as training is completed. (See the DoD response to Recommendation 8.)

FINDING K: Storage Of A&E Issued To Units. According to the GAO, when the ASP issues A&E for training, it is most vulnerable to theft, since unit controls and security are generally weaker than those of

the ASP. The GAO concluded, therefore, that it is important that units return unused A&E to the ASP immediately after training is completed. At Fort Bragg, the GAO found that, with written authorization, unit commanders can temporarily store certain A&E items for as long as ten days in rooms where their weapons are stored, while permanent or long-term storage of guard ammunition is permitted in certain situations. The GAO also found that storage of A&E on unit premises without proper authorization has been identified as a deficiency in a number of inspection reports. The GAO observed that, in contrast to these practices, Camp Pendleton does not authorize units to store A&E outside the ASP. The GAO concluded that storage of A&E on unit premises weakens control. (p. 5, p. 32, pp. 43-44/GAO Draft Report)

Now on pp. 4, 28.

DOD RESPONSE: Partially concur. The Department concurs that storage of ammunition on unit premises may weaken control and, when practical, A&E should be returned to the ASP. Operational requirements, however, frequently dictate that units store small quantities of A&E for short periods of time in areas under their supervision. Current regulations authorize unit commanders to temporarily store ammunition in unit arms rooms. Inspection results indicate that units are properly securing ammunition and are complying with regulatory requirements. Internal controls for operational loads appear adequate.

FINDING L: Effect Of The Fort Bragg Amnesty Program. The GAO found that Fort Bragg operates a continuous amnesty program to retrieve unauthorized A&E. The GAO reported that, under this program, individual soldiers and units are allowed to return A&E without question or punishment. The GAO acknowledged that Fort Bragg is recovering some stolen items under the program. The GAO concluded, however, that the program may impair control of A&E, since it lessens the chance of soldiers being caught and punished with stolen items, thereby providing a non-punitive escape route that may encourage some soldiers to steal A&E. The GAO observed that, in contrast, Camp Pendleton does not have an amnesty program. The GAO pointed out that in the opinion of a Camp Pendleton official, an amnesty program would imply that unauthorized possession will be tolerated. (p. 5, pp. 44-45/GAO Draft Report)

Now on pp. 4, 28-29.

DOD RESPONSE: Partially concur. Fort Bragg operates an amnesty program that allows individual soldiers and units to return A&E without question or punishment. It is speculative, however, to conclude that material recovered in this manner is necessarily stolen

or that the program may "encourage some soldiers to steal A&E." The program is designed to ensure maximum recovery of A&E that has escaped the system. It provides an authorized procedure for return of this material and reduces the real and more dangerous possibility of unauthorized disposal in public dumps, lakes and streams or random burial sites. The amnesty program first and foremost considers public safety and proper control of A&E. Punitive actions are adequately addressed through other methods of A&E management.

FINDING M: **Noncompliance With A&E Accountability Procedures**. The GAO found that since 1986, Fort Bragg has increased its inspections of unit compliance with A&E controls. The GAO noted that these inspection reports identify which commands are responsible for A&E violations and are intended to ensure that units comply with A&E procedures. The GAO found, however, that noncompliance with A&E controls has continued at the same overall rate. According to the GAO, some of the more common problems reported were (1) the failure of the unit to provide physical security for ammunition, (2) storing ammunition without proper authorization and (3) the failure to accurately complete A&E control forms. The GAO concluded that the high rate of noncompliance at Fort Bragg indicates a need for further education, monitoring and enforcement of regulations, and punitive actions against those failing to follow regulations. (p. 5, pp. 45-47/GAO Draft Report)

Now on pp. 4, 29-30.

DOD RESPONSE: Concur. Formal training for control, accountability, and security of A&E is required for all Fort Bragg unit Non-Commissioned Officers handling A&E and all range Non-Commissioned Officers in Charge/Officers in Charge. The system is monitored through QASAS and Physical Security Inspections Programs and by increased command emphasis on management of A&E during quarterly commanders' conferences. Punitive actions are taken as deemed appropriate for the offense by the commander. (See the DoD response to Recommendation 9.)

FINDING N: **Improved Controls Over Combat Gear At Camp Pendleton**. The GAO reported that, between 1981 and 1984, law enforcement officials conducted a major "sting" operation called RIPSTOP, involving Government property, (including combat gear) stolen from Camp Pendleton. The GAO found that, since then, several measures have been implemented at Pendleton to improve controls over combat gear. According to the GAO, improvements have included (1) requiring command-level involvement in property control, (2) increasing record checks, inspecting Marines and inventorying equipment, (3) providing

additional training and briefings on accountability, and (4) increasing overall physical security. The GAO reported that, in recent years, the Naval Audit Service, the Marine Corps Inspector General, the Camp Pendleton Field Supply and Maintenance Analysis Office, as well as the GAO, have evaluated the controls over combat gear at Pendleton and found them to be adequate, with no major material deficiencies. Although the GAO identified some minor weaknesses, it reaffirmed the adequacy of the Camp Pendleton controls. Overall, the GAO concluded that if the new measures are routinely practiced, they, along with the planned physical security improvements, should be sufficient to prevent large-scale thefts of combat gear like those that occurred during RIPSTOP. (pp. 51-57/GAO Draft Report)

Now on pp. 33-35.

DOD RESPONSE: Concur. The Department acknowledges the improvements in controls and accountability at Camp Pendleton. Continued command emphasis and involvement will maintain the momentum already established in preventing A&E losses. The DoD would like to point out that it was the Marine Corps emphasis and command attention that identified the problem at Camp Pendleton, which led to the "Sting" operation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

RECOMMENDATION 1: The GAO recommended that the Commanding General, Camp Pendleton, take appropriate action to ensure that range inspections are more thorough, and that Marines are regularly searched for A&E before they leave the range after training exercises. (p. 6, p. 31/GAO Draft Report)

Now on pp. 4, 19.

DOD RESPONSE: Concur. The Commanding General, Marine Corps Base, Camp Pendleton has already taken action to ensure range inspections are more thorough. The Commanding General has increased the number of Range Inspectors from two to six and requested the appropriate Table of Organization change to permanently support this increase. Increased emphasis has been placed on the conduct of range inspections and the use of physical searches during Range Safety Officer periods of instruction. (See the DoD response to Finding C.)

RECOMMENDATION 2: The GAO recommended that the Commanding General, Camp Pendleton, take appropriate action to ensure that the Camp's

Now on pp. 4, 19.

procedures for controlling A&E are complied with. (p. 6, p. 31/GAO Draft Report)

DOD RESPONSE: Concur. The Commanding General, Camp Pendleton has taken action to ensure compliance with A&E procedures. Presently, all units are properly completing the Receipt/Expenditure report and returning a copy to the unit's responsible Ammunition Section for reconciliation. Major command ordnance officers are monitoring reports. Supply and Maintenance Assistance Teams continue to emphasize A&E procedures during their visits. (See the DoD response to Finding D.)

RECOMMENDATION 3: The GAO recommended that the Commanding General, Camp Pendleton, take appropriate action to require that the Marine Corps Base's ordnance office updates its units' A&E account balances when their requisitions are approved. (p. 31/GAO Draft Report)

Now on p. 19.

DOD RESPONSE: Concur. The Commanding General, Camp Pendleton, has taken action to have his ordnance office update the unit's A&E account balances when requisitions are approved. The final adjustment to inventory records continues to be made from the source document (DD Form 1348-1) after final receipt. The Base ordnance office, however, now annotates unit records at the time requisitions are approved, utilizing a card system, pending the receipt of the DD Form 1348-1 from the ASP. (See the DoD response to Finding E.)

RECOMMENDATION 4: The GAO recommended that the Commanding General, Camp Pendleton, take appropriate action to modify the delegation-of-authority card to allow enough space for signatures so that individuals authorized to receive A&E and their requisitions and other documents can be verified. (p. 31/GAO Draft Report)

Now on p. 19.

DOD RESPONSE: Nonconcur. While the DoD agrees in principle with the GAO objective, a modification of the delegation-of-authority card is not necessary. Instead, increased command attention will be given to ensure that the cards are completed properly and that signatures are legible so they can be verified. The Department could concur with a recommendation stating that, "Recommend the Commanding General, Camp Pendleton, take appropriate action to ensure that delegation-of-authority cards are properly completed and that signatures are legible so they can be verified." (See the DoD response to Finding F.)

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RECOMMENDATION 5: The GAO recommended that the Commanding General, Camp Pendleton, take appropriate action to improve the range safety officer training course so that it emphasizes A&E accountability and provides guidance for certifying A&E expenditures on training ranges. (p. 31/GAO Draft Report)

DOD RESPONSE: Concur. The Commanding General, Camp Pendleton has taken action to improve the Range Safety Officer training course. Greater emphasis is placed on ensuring that individuals understand the role of the Range Safety Officer as it pertains to A&E accountability. (See the DoD response to Finding G.)

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RECOMMENDATION 6: The GAO recommended that the Secretary of the Army eliminate the reconciliation of small-arms ammunition residue. (p. 6, p. 49/GAO Draft Report)

DOD RESPONSE: Concur. As a result of discussions between Army and GAO representatives in November 1986, the small-arms residue reconciliation requirement was deleted by message sent to all Commands on November 17, 1986. Residue is being returned to the Fort Bragg ASP so that the it can be reclaimed for its salvage/resale value. The ASP functions as a central collection point for residue, screens the residue, removes explosives/hazardous items, and makes a consolidated turn-in to the Defense Reutilization and Marketing Office.

The Force Command had directed that items no longer required for reconciliation be recovered as directed by installation supply activities to ensure maximum recovery of valuable/usable articles. Fort Bragg recovered brass by weighing to ensure maximum return of a resale item. Return procedures are being modified at Fort Bragg which will yield significant time savings. (See the DoD response to Finding H.)

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RECOMMENDATION 7: The GAO recommended that the Commanding General, Fort Bragg, expand the ASP hours of operation to enable immediate return of unused A&E to its control. (p. 6, p. 49/GAO Draft Report)

DOD RESPONSE: Concur. Plans are to extend hours of operation as appropriate. Manpower constraints are a critical factor in the operation of the ASP at this time. Hours cannot be expanded without reduction in current workload or increase in manpower. With the resulting time saving in return procedures noted in Recommendation 6,

sufficient manpower will be made available to modify ASP hours as needed. (See the DoD response to Finding J.)

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RECOMMENDATION 8: The GAO recommended that the Commanding General, Fort Bragg, eliminate the "holding area" for A&E under unit control and the temporary storage of A&E on unit premises. (p. 6, p. 49/GAO Draft Report)

DOD RESPONSE: Nonconcur. This recommendation appears to be based upon GAO observations at Camp Pendleton. While Camp Pendleton does not have a physical holding area, units are allowed to draw ammunition the day prior to range firing and leave ammunition on unit vehicles parked in the ASP.

Most units at Fort Bragg plan to start training or to conduct range firing in the early morning. If the ASP did not have a holding area, the ASP would not be able to issue A&E to all units early enough to conduct training. If no holding area existed, units would continue to draw ammunition from the ASP the day prior to range firing or training, but would temporarily store and guard the ammunition on the range overnight. This is much less secure than utilizing the current holding area within the ASP.

There are conditions under which units have a valid need to store small quantities of ammunition for short periods of time. AR 190-11, Physical Security of Arms, Ammunition, and Explosives, authorizes commanders to temporarily store ammunition in unit arms rooms and establishes security requirements. Discrepancies identified during Quality Assurance Specialists Ammunition Surveillance (QASAS) inspections are receiving increased command emphasis. Inspection results indicate units are properly securing ammunition and are complying with regulatory requirements. The Department could concur with a recommendation stating that, "Recommend the Commanding General, Fort Bragg ensure that storage of A&E in holding areas outside the ASP is minimized and that when operational considerations necessitate such storage, it comply with all security and regulatory requirements." (See the DoD response to Finding J and Recommendation 9.)

RECOMMENDATION 9: The GAO recommended that the Commanding General, Fort Bragg, monitor the results of the QASAS inspections and enforce compliance among those units and commands found to deviate from

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prescribed A&E regulations and procedures. (p. 6, pp. 49-50/GAO Draft Report)

DOD RESPONSE: Concur. The Director of Logistics (DOL) has been delegated the authority to monitor overall ammunition accountability and controls for Fort Bragg. Inspection results are documented weekly and forwarded to each of the major subordinate commanders for corrective action. These discrepancy reports are forwarded under the Corps Chief of Staff's signature for increased command emphasis. The weekly inspection results are maintained in an automated program which produces monthly and quarterly statistics. Statistics are given to the Commanding General, Deputy Commanding General, Corps Chief of Staff, and all commanders during quarterly commanders' conferences. Command emphasis is very apparent during each of these quarterly conferences. Various guidance and updates are published periodically on ammunition accountability, controls, and noticeable trends during on-site inspections. Other inspection findings such as security inspections and roadside checks are processed through command channels to each appropriate commander to take actions deemed necessary to correct offense noted. Follow-up inspections are scheduled to ensure the organization found to have operating deficiencies corrects those deficiencies. For example, if deficiencies are found in the unit's arms room, a reinspection is conducted within the next five working days. If deficiencies are noted on A&E carrying vehicles, inspections are scheduled for the next time that unit draws A&E. (See the DoD response to Finding M.)

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